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Editors

Assorted Speech Acts

This section presents a variety of speech acts including, compliments, refusals, complaints, and requests while waiting in lines. In "Leave a Speech Act after the Beep": Pragmatics on the Telephone," Demo illustrates how learners can use their telephone answering machines or message services to collect data on a variety of speech acts. Hardy addresses both nonverbal and verbal aspects of waiting in line, including how to ask someone to hold a place in line in "The Rules of the Queue." Both face-to-face and written complaints in business and commercial exchanges are practiced in "Complaining Successfully: Negotiating Redress in Service Encounters" by Reynolds. Moving from the institutional to the social, Ishihara and Kondo offer activities related to complimenting and refusing an invitation. In "Giving and Responding to Compliments," Ishihara develops a multi-component instructional unit in which learner practice the two speech acts of the title. Finally, in "Teaching Refusals in an EFL Setting," Kondo demonstrates how comparisons of speech act production in the first and second languages can be used to help learners discover pragmatics differences in a five-step unit that includes discussing feelings as well as linguistic characteristics.

'Leave A Speech Act After The Beep': Using the Telephone to Teach Pragmatics

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Level: This activity can be adapted for beginning through advanced levels

Time: Out-of-class: 15-20 minutes (for transcription)

In-class: 45 minutes (Depending on the amount of time available, this activity can be adapted for shorter or longer times)

Resources: Telephone answering machine or voice mail system

Goal: To learn to make requests, extend invitations, and offer congratulations (or other speech acts); to learn how to open and close telephone conversations when leaving a message.

Description of the Activity

In this activity students have the opportunity to become discourse analysts by studying speech acts left on answering machines/voice mail systems. Rather than teaching speech acts through the use of scripted dialogues or decontextualized examples, this activity puts the focus of learning in the hands of the students as they search for language patterns in a database of language samples which they themselves have collected.

The database of speech acts is created by having the students ask a native-speaker friend to call their home and leave a message on their answering machine or voice mail. The native speaker is given a card which briefly mentions the type of message to leave.

> *In my English class we are studying how Americans talk on the telephone. Could you please call me and leave a message on my answering machine asking to see my notes from yesterday's class that you missed? My telephone number is 555-5555. Thanks!*

Although the general speech act is given to the native speaker, there are no explicit instructions about what to say when leaving the message. Depending on the number of native speakers available, students can ask from one or up to ten native speakers to call and leave a message. (If 15 students each collect five messages, that will yield a database of 75

speech acts!) Students then transcribe their collection of messages which are used later for individual, paired, or group analysis.

The teacher can also facilitate discussion of the speech acts by highlighting various linguistic or discourse features about the messages such as verb forms, politeness strategies, and openings and closings. Students can practice leaving messages on each other's answering machines and compare their messages to those left by native speakers. In sum, this activity creates a sizeable database from which students can work as discourse analysts, searching for both consistent patterns of language use as well as sociolinguistic variation about speech acts in the samples.

Procedure

1. Choose one or more speech acts for students to investigate (see sample below). Depending on the size of the class and the time available the students can all study the same speech act or be divided into pairs or groups and assigned different speech acts.
2. Write down the instructions for the callers which the students can later distribute to their native-speaking friends. One example is given above. The instructions may vary depending on the focus of the lesson. Remind students not to pick up the phone!
3. After recording the messages on their answering machines, each student should make a written transcription of each caller's message.
4. Students can analyze the data individually, in pairs or in groups and can later discuss the results with the entire class.

In order to get a more complete picture of how speech acts fit into the larger discourse activity of leaving a message, encourage students to look also at the beginnings and endings of the messages. That is, investigate the openings, pre-closings and closings of the phone calls.

a. What greeting is used is used by the caller? (*hello, hi, hey*)
b. What form of personal identification is used by the caller? (*It's John, It's me, This is Dr. Smith's office*)
c. What pre-closing signals are used by the caller? (*Well, I guess that's it; See ya soon)*
d. What closing is used by the caller? (*Bye, Later, Ciao*)

e. Compare the openings, pre-closings, and closings with other dialogues in the students' text and with other recorded conversations. How are they the same/different?

f. If possible, have students record the same interactions with speakers of their native language. Discuss any similarities/differences between the opening, pre-closing and closing signals in the recorded messages with those of their native language.

5. If possible, students can bring in the tapes of the messages so that examples can be played and paralinguistic cues such as intonation, pausing, hesitation, etc. can also be studied.

Rationale

Language teachers are often encouraged to use authentic pieces of discourse in the curriculum; however, collecting and analyzing extended segments of discourse can be cumbersome and impractical for a classroom setting. This activity remedies that problem by using answering machine messages, which naturally elicit a smaller stretch of discourse while maintaining their integrity as a complete speech event. The method of data collection is fairly straightforward since the short length of each message makes for easy transcription. Yet the database of discourse samples can be recycled for a variety of teaching and learning opportunities.

By encouraging students to become discourse analysts, this activity helps students to develop their critical thinking skills as they search for patterns of language use in the speech samples. They not only develop an greater sense of how language is used in context, but they also gain a greater understanding and awareness of language variation.

Alternatives and Caveats

This activity allows for considerable variation in its implementation. For example, teachers can assign different speech acts to different groups in the classroom thereby increasing students' exposure to more than one speech act. Also, the data collected can be recycled at other times to study other discourse features such as openings and closings, formulaic expressions, or politeness strategies. The data can also be used to examine specific linguistic structures in context such as specific verb forms, article usage and question formation or paralinguistic elements such as intonation, pausing, and pacing. By

altering specific aspects of the prompt, students can also learn about sociolinguistic language variation as callers alter their messages to meet the changing demands of the prompt (e.g. requesting $10 versus $100). Results can be compared with descriptions found in the students' textbook and/or with their own L2 production. Students can practice leaving messages on each other's answering machines and compare them with each other and/or with the NS data. Finally, by collecting L1 samples students can engage in cross-linguistic comparisons of speech acts in their native language versus English.

Teacher Resource

Some suggestions for speech acts:

Making a request:	Extending an invitation:	Offering congratulations:
1. for money	to a party	on the arrival of a new baby
2. for car/bike	for a date	on a recent wedding
3. for a book	to a lecture	on an engagement
4. for a ride to class	to the movies	for someone's anniversary
5. for a food item (sugar)	to lunch/dinner	for HS/college graduation
6. for clothing/jewelry	to a concert	on the purchase of a new house
7. for a computer	for coffee	on a pregnancy
8. for a CD, videotape	to a sports event	on a new job

Additional Reading

Hatch, E. (1992*). Discourse and Language Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Riggenbach, H. (1999). Discourse Analysis in the Language Classroom: Volume 1. *The Spoken Language*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

The Rules of the Queue

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Level: Intermediate or above
Time: 30 minutes for initial demonstration, and 15-30 minutes for follow-up role play
Resources: Chalk board, white board, or OHP; at least one movable desk or table and space for students to engage in physical role play.
Goal: To learn the pragmatics and culture of queuing.

Description of the Activity

The teacher asks the students if they have had to wait in line recently and writes the identified places on the board. She then asks what the experience was like: Was the line long? Did you have to wait a long time? How did you feel while waiting? One student describes waiting in line at the bank, and the teacher chooses that example for illustration. She asks for one student to be a bank teller and arranges that student at an imaginary bank window. Then she asks for several volunteer 'customers' to wait in line at the bank. The students line up with varying degrees of orderliness. The teacher asks the remaining students to comment on the form of the line: Is this the way you queue in your countries? Is this the way people queue in the US? How is it different? The teacher illustrates the concept of proxemics by joining the line and standing very close to the student in front of her. A discussion follows about 'personal space,' and other students are asked to show the physical distance with which each feels comfortable. The purpose here is obviously to point out that different cultures have different concepts of personal space.

Next the teacher tells one of the students that her car is parked at a parking meter and the time is running out. If she doesn't put in more coins, she will get a ticket. Should she leave the line and lose her place, or stay in line and get a parking ticket? One student suggests that she should be able to leave the line and return to the same place. The teacher asks how she could accomplish this, and writes appropriate expressions on the board ("Would you mind holding my place in line?" "It will just take me a minute." "I should be right back." and so on.) From student input, the teacher identifies and numbers the steps that one must go through to ask someone to hold their place in line, and fills in any missing language forms:

1. Getting the attention of the person behind you ("Excuse me")
2. Identifying your reason for needing to leave the line ("I need to put some more coins in the parking meter, or I'll get a ticket..")
3. Asking the person to hold your place ("Would you mind holding my place in line?")
4. Promising to return to the line promptly ("I'll be right back.")
5. Returning to the line ("Thanks a lot.")

The teacher then identifies appropriate responses to the request: "Sure," or "I'd be glad to."

The activity continues with a series of role plays. The teacher divides the students into groups of 4 or 5 and identifies the place that each group will be waiting. One student from each group is identified as the employee, and one as the customer who needs to leave the line. The role plays are successfully completed when the student standing behind the 'customer' requesting to leave the line accepts the request. This student has to evaluate the request to be sure that it included all of the necessary parts and was sufficiently polite. The employee and other 'customers' in the line can serve as judges to be sure that the student granting permission is being fair. Students trade roles until each student has had the opportunity to be the one needing to leave the line.

After the role plays are completed, the teacher follows up by eliciting student reactions or additional questions that arose during the role plays.

Procedure

1. (Warm-up) Ask students where they have to wait in line (the post office, the bank, the airport, a movie theater, or a fast food restaurant.) Ask them to describe the experience of waiting in line.
2. On a chalk board or OHP, identify with student input key vocabulary and expressions for waiting in line (differences between American and British English could be identified here if desired): to queue, to wait in line, to cut in line, 'no cutting,' to jump queue, or to hold one's place.
3. Choose one of the places identified by students in #1 for a demonstration.
4. Choose one student to be the employee at a serving station, and seat the student at a desk or table with plenty of space around it.
5. Invite 6 or 8 other students to stand up and tell them that they are customers waiting in line. Let them arrange themselves in line without any instruction. If they

are from different cultures, they may go about this in different ways, providing material for comparison and discussion.

6. Depending on the form of the line, the teacher can illustrate line behavior by pointing out behavior that coincides with or deviates from the accepted norm of the US or target culture. This could include the way in which the line is formed (straight back from the serving station or to the side), how close people stand to each other, and how much space they leave between the person at the serving station and the next person in line. The students not participating in the demonstration can be asked to identify such points: Is this the way people queue in your country? In the US? If not, how is it different?

7. Ask the students not involved in the demonstration what happens if they need to leave the line for some reason (to put more money in the parking meter, to go to the bathroom, or to make a phone call). Elicit suggestions for what they could do if they needed to leave the line. Is there any way that they could return to their place rather than returning to the end of the line?

8. Through guided brainstorming, identify necessary language for leaving the line, holding one's place, and returning to the line. Add the list of expression to those in #2.

9. Identify for students the crucial steps in leaving and returning to the line (see description above), and how one can respond to a request to hold someone else's place.

10. Divide the students into reasonably sized groups and have them role play waiting in line. For each group, identify the place that they are waiting and designate the roles of employee, customers, and person(s) who want to leave the line and return.

11. A role play has been successfully completed when the person standing behind the student wanting to leave the line has agreed to the request. Other students in the line can serve as judges.

Rationale

Queuing behavior differs from culture to culture. In some countries, people crowd around a serving station *en masse*, a system which unnerves the average American. In other cultures, people line up to the right of a serving station, rather than forming a line which

faces the window. This activity is presented to teach the culture and pragmatics of the queues most common in the US: the multi-server queue, where each serving station has a separate waiting line; and the 'snake' line, commonly found in airports and banks, where all stations are served by one single file line (Hall, 1993).

This activity is intended to teach not only the pragmatics of language required while queuing, but to incorporate additional information about cultural expectations and proxemics. Americans in particular expect a high degree of orderliness when waiting in line and become angry when others violate their personal space or attempt to 'cut' in line. In theme parks this cultural expectation is taken to the extreme: violators of the 'rules' of queuing are threatened with expulsion from the park!

By getting learners physically involved in a queuing role play, this activity can prepare students for actual situations they may face in the target culture, and it is more meaningful than merely reading about queues in a book or hearing a verbal description. It also provides an opportunity for kinesthetic learning (Reid, 1995).

Alternatives and Caveats

I have used this activity successfully in mixed-culture ESL classes in the US. Students have expressed interest in culturally appropriate 'queuing etiquette' and the language forms needed to leave and return to a line. Students have also enjoyed sharing experiences they have had when they apparently violated someone's personal space.

This activity can also be used in an EFL context, but it is obviously more interesting and effective when the target culture has different queuing behavior and different proxemics. Nevertheless, the activity can still be presented in abbreviated form to EFL classes which are culturally similar to the US by placing more emphasis on the language forms and less emphasis on the 'rules of the queue.'

As an alternative to the suggested warm-up, the teacher can show the students a picture of a queue and ask them where they think it is, how it makes them feel, what similar experiences they have had, etc. In the role plays, students can take turns choosing the place where they are queuing, and identify their own reasons for needing to leave the line. This affords the opportunity for more creativity, especially with more advanced students. The activity could be followed by a reading about queuing behavior. Finally, this activity could be used as one in a series focusing on making and responding to requests.

References

Hall, R. (1993, February 7). Queues: You are how you wait. *San Antonio Express News*. Reprinted in: Defense Language Institute English Language Center (1994). *Module 981 Academic Reading*. Government Printing Office: Defense Language Institute.

Ladousse, G.P. (1987). *Role Play*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reid, J.M. (Ed.) (1995). *Learning Styles in the ESL/EFL Classroom*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Complaining Successfully: Negotiating Redress in Service Encounters

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Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Time: 2 50 minute lessons

Resources: Internet access for teacher and possibly students

Goal: To learn how to make complaints during service encounters

Description of the Activity

This activity develops students' awareness of both written and oral complaint forms as they are used during service encounters. In this lesson students become aware of both the general script of a service encounter as well as the linguistic forms that are common to the different segments.

As a warm-up activity, ask students about problems they have had with different commercial products or services. Ask them whether they did anything about the problem and whether or not they were satisfied with the result. Focus on any general lack of confidence they may have felt about negotiating a service encounter as well as problems they had in knowing what to say. This will make clear to them the need for the activity as well as help them formulate specific questions regarding useful language formulas.

The activity begins by having students analyze examples of written complaints, which are easily available via internet sources. Some web sites post complaint letters specifically directed towards a business and even help consumers write the letter through an input form (e.g. http://www.planetfeedback.com/) whereas others allow site visitors to post unedited descriptions of problems they have had with a company (e.g. http://www.complaints.com/). Both types of postings can provide useful sample texts for students to work from.

The letter shown in Appendix A is a form-generated letter posted on the Planet Feedback site. It illustrates well the three principal segments of written complaints: a statement of the problem, a request for redress, and a statement about future intentions. The first segment is an explanation of the circumstances that led to the complaint. In the example text it is preceded by an opening sentence identifying the letter as a complaint and providing a

general description of what the complaint is about. The actual description of the problem is delivered as a narrative and includes details about the time and participants involved as well as expressives that reveal the complainant's state of mind. Linguistic forms that can be highlighted when working on this section include time adverbials and tense forms. Using the example text, an interesting question to pose is why the writer uses present perfect instead of simple past. Is it because the complaint is being posted on the internet possibly while the writer is still trying to contact the store, or as is more likely, is it a way of conveying the present impact of the event on the writer's mental state? Additional discussion regarding the problem statement could focus on differences between expressives such as *I'm tired of, I was (really) upset, I couldn't believe, she had the nerve to,* and *this is (totally) unacceptable*.

The next segment of a written complaint is usually a request for action by the offending party. In the sample text, this segment opens with the informal, "Here's how you can help," followed by a bald imperative (*Get the phones out of there*) and and an *if* clause *(If you are not going to answer them…)*. For this text, discussion could focus on what makes the opening formula appear informal and why the author(s) might have chosen that tone. Students could also be asked how the *if* clause relates to the imperative (e.g. does it make it more forceful or soften it) and whether they think the imperative is the resultative clause (i.e. *if you are not going to answer the phones, then get them out*) or an implied resultative clause containing an expletive (i.e. *then why the *&%$# are they there?)*. This could springboard into a discussion of how implicature often conveys a stronger sentiment than actually making the statement. Finally students could be asked to consider alternative directives and different politeness markers that could be used to modulate them, for example, *I would like, I expect, I think you should*.

The final segment is a statement about future intentions. In written complaints this often includes how to contact the complainant, a conditional statement about what the complainant will do if the complaint is not addressed satisfactorily, and a positive statement about what the complainant will do if redress is provided. In the sample text, the contact information is not provided but there is a statement about how much business the consumer provides the store as well as a statement of what will happen if redress is not made. Discussion of this section may focus on how to balance threats with rewards and judgments about how successful the sample texts are at doing this.

The sample texts are provided as input for learners to help them recognize the functional

segments of complaints and to begin to identify grammatical formula such as imperatives, conditional statements, and ellipsis that may be useful when making complaints. As illustrated in the sample text, however, there are often linguistic or logical inconsistencies when using machine-generated letters. (That's a good lesson for students to learn by itself.) Inconsistencies are also a common feature in texts that come from sites where it is not completely clear whether the intended audience for the complaint is other consumers or the offending company. An example of this kind of text is found in Appendix B. These inconsistencies can be handled initially through asking the students to edit the texts and then subsequently through group discussion.

Finally, after students have worked with the sample authentic texts students can be directed to a consumer handbook for prescriptive guidelines on how to making a successful complaint, such as the U.S. government's Consumer Action Handbook (http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/crh/respref.htm) .

The second part of the activity, which is usually best left to a second lesson, uses the scripts and linguistic forms learned from the analysis of written complaints as a springboard to making face-to-face oral complaints. In face-to-face interactions complainants need to show deference to the recipient of the complaint through polite--but formal--address terms, modalized verb forms, and strategic pauses to allow the addressee to respond. At the same time, they need to be able to modulate their directives during a negotiating phase that often occurs after the request for action. Finally, they may need to know how to escalate their complaints if redress is not granted initially. Because it is more difficult to get examples of oral complaints for students to analyze, the content for this lesson is generated from student role-plays based on scenarios taken from the written complaints analyzed during the first lesson or from scenarios suggested by students during the initial warm-up activity. The follow-up discussion for this lesson should focus on segments present in the face-to-face encounters that were not present in the written complaints, such as the negotiation phase, the order of the segments (oral complaints often begin with the action request and then use the explanation of circumstances as a justification), and the role of politeness markers in managing the conversation.

Procedure

1. Analysis of written complaints (Lesson 1)

    a. Prior to class

    Visit internet sites that specialize in delivering consumer complaints to businesses (e.g. http://www.planetfeedback.com/ or http://www.complaints.com/) and print out complaints posted on the site; try to choose complaints from different categories – this can be done by the instructor or students.

    b. Warm-up

    Open with a discussion of problems students have had with specific products or services; focus on what if anything they did about the problem and whether they felt their actions were successful; make a list of problems for use later as role-play scenarios.

    c. Sample Text Analysis

        i. Organize the class into pairs or small groups and give each group a sample text.

        ii. Ask them first to judge whether they think the sample complaints will be successful and to note any inconsistencies or possible nonstandard uses of language in the samples – this can be done as an editing exercise if time permits.

        iii. Have the students divide the texts into segments and provide a label for the purpose of each segment. (At this point teachers may wish to explicitly present the three segments--statement of the problem, request for action, and statement of future intentions—or to continue working inductively until step (iv).

iv. Compare written complaints about different products/services to arrive at generic complaint script. (If teachers haven't presented the three segments earlier, it can be done here.)

v. Have students make lists of useful vocabulary according to function (e.g. words which reveal writer's feelings, directives, contingency statements) and to note which segment(s) the vocabulary is likely to occur in.

d. Have students research on-line consumer advocacy sites (e.g. http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/crh/respref.htm) for advice about making complaints -- most of these sites should provide some confirmation of the scripts developed by the students but not as much information about the linguistic formulae.

2. Role play oral complaints (Lesson 2)

a. Choose scenarios from the students' opening discussion or from the sample texts analyzed in the preceding lesson that can be role-played by pairs of students (e.g. complaining to a store manager about not being waited on, or complaining to an airline gate agent about lack of information regarding a flight delay).

b. Specify that the role play must cover the time from when the complainer enters the service encounter location until they leave.

c. While the role play is being performed, ask other students to reference the script prepared for written complaints and check off any of the linguistic formulae that they hear the complainer use

d. Ask students in audience to rate each role play on how likely the complainer is to achieve a satisfactory resolution using a scale from 1

(highly unlikely) to 5 (most probably). Learners could also be asked to provide an explanation for their ratings.

e. As a wrap-up discuss with students how face-to-face complaints are different from written complaints (see if they can write a new script) and factors that seem to affect encounter success (focus on politeness moves and directness levels).

Rationale

Language learners need to be able to negotiate the intricacies of service encounters, whether carried out through an exchange of letters or emails or through face-to-face interaction. In this age of global commerce characterized by multi-national corporations and on-line purchases, EFL learners may need to complain in English about goods and services they have purchased just as new arrivals in the US may have to seek repairs for the used car they were assured was only driven on Sundays by the little old lady from Pasadena. For many learners, success in commercial service encounters is a sign that they can take care of themselves in the target language culture and as such may encourage them to engage in even more difficult interactions.

Alternatives and Caveats

The lesson outlined above is a general model that could be modified in a number of ways. For the first part of the lesson, students could be given a list of web sites where complaints are posted and asked to select examples themselves of complaints they might need to make at some point in the future. Also if time permits, sample texts can be analyzed by more than one group of students and then the analyses compared. For the second lesson focusing on face-to-face service encounters, it may be useful to instruct some of the students playing the roles of business representatives to initially refuse to offer redress for the complaint. This allows for a secondary focus on how to be forceful when necessary.

As follow-up activities, students could be instructed to write their own letters of complaint, which would then be answered by other students. If students are studying in a target-language context they might be asked to visit the Consumer Service desk of a large

department store or supermarket and observe the encounters that take place there. Finally, teachers may wish to brainstorm with students about complaints that take place in non-consumer situations such as a grade complaint during academic office hours. Whatever the source of the material, keep in mind that discussion should focus on the sequencing of discourse units, the effects of different linguistic forms, and the types of information that should and should not be provided during a complaint.

Appendix A

Sample Text from Business Directed Internet Site

Will not answer phones

To: Best Buy

I'm writing to bring your attention to a problem I've had with information availability with one of your products. I hope Best Buy will address this problem to my satisfaction. This concerns a retailer located at Asheville NC. This incident has left me extremely angry.

Here's my problem: I have been trying to get a person on the phone.. I have let the phone ring now for about 8 mins. and no one answers.. I have tried several department and still no answer. I have even tried the operator. If this is the type of customer service that I can grow to expect then I think I will start going else where.

Here's how you can help: Get the phones out of there. If you are not going to answer them...

I occasionally use Best Buy for electronics. My average purchase with you is about $600.00. My number one reason for doing business with you is because you offer great prices that are better than the competition.

Based on all of my dealings with your company, I am very unhappy. I have decided I will never do business with you again. Also, I will not recommend your company to others.

If you were to correct this problem, I probably would not pay more because this is a standard expectation in your business.

I know you like to keep your customers happy, so I am sure you'll take steps to rectify this situation. I expect to hear from you soon. Thank you.

From:
Kevin W.
Hendersonville, NC

Found at http://www.planetfeedback.com/ (Last accessed March 19, 2001)

Appendix B
Example Text from General Posting Internet Site

I visited this store to buy an Omega Constellation watch. When asked I gave the model number. The owner asked whether I found the number on the web. I said yes. He gave me a long winded explanation about the fake and unauthorized watches that were being sold on the web.
Then he mentioned that if I bought the watch from him, he would polish it or provide batteries at a low price regularly. I replied that I was buying it as a gift for a friend. He said "In that case you can go ahead and buy a cheap fake from the web".

I was ready to buy the watch, but he was so sarcastic and rude, that I felt humiliated and walked out. In his frustration that he cannot match the prices on the internet, he forgot how to treat a prospective buyer!. Being polite to the customer is important my friend.

Found at
http://www.complaints.com/complaintofthedayJanuary172001.14.htm
Last accessed March 19, 2001

Giving and Responding to Compliments

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Level: High intermediate level, adult ESL students

Time: 4 lessons, 40-50 minutes per lesson

Resources: Handouts adapted from Manes &Wolfson (1981), Billmyer (1990), Dunham (1992)

Goals: To raise learners' awareness about pragmatic rules; to increase input to learners and opportunities to observe native English speakers' pragmatic behavior; to assist learners in expressing themselves better through speech act sets

Description of the Activity

This unit begins by having learners individually complete a pragmatics inventory. Using their responses on the inventory, learners share their perspectives about complimenting behavior in the U.S. and their native countries in a class discussion that gives them the opportunity to voice their varying expectations and cultural differences. In my classes, for example, Asian learners were shocked by the frequency and explicitness with which Spanish speakers give compliments in their cultures; Arabic speakers fascinated the others with the way they respond to compliments in their language. Also, some learners guessed that people of higher status were more likely to receive compliments. Since this did not correspond to the findings in the class readings, it helped to motivate learners to conduct their own survey on complimenting behavior.

In the following stage, learners collect samples of native speakers' compliments and responses and study them to see whether their own findings conform to those reported for American compliments. Each learner collects at least three compliments and responses by listening to native English speakers or by sincerely complimenting them, and jots down the interactions immediately after the each conversation. This combination of data collection and production encourages learners to observe and analyze native speakers' compliments and to use compliments in their own conversations. These data are generally good models, being rich in variety. I have found that some learners continue the use of compliments beyond the classroom instruction. Although a few learners have reported awkwardness in

conducting the survey, they generally enjoy experimenting and they learn the importance of being sincere in giving compliments. This initial learner involvement is intended to raise learners' pragmatic awareness, provide authentic linguistic input, and create a learner-centered class.

After compliments themselves are investigated, learners complete an optional worksheet on cultural values as reflected in compliments (see Teacher Resources). In an attempt to attain the second objective of increasing learners' input, findings from learner-collected data and good transcripts are shared in class and speaking exercises are conducted at several points.

In the speaking exercise, learners practice both giving and receiving compliments. They form two concentric circles, facing a partner. The students in the outside circle look at their partner and try to find some nice quality to compliment them on and give a compliment. The students in the inside circle respond to the compliment. The circles then move over by one person, the students change partners, and repeat the exercise. When they have completed the circle, they switch roles and go around again. Advise your students that they do not always have to accept compliments, but to express themselves in the most comfortable way, perhaps using a deflection strategy such as downgrading, questioning and shifting credit. This activity functions as a good springboard for even more learner-initiated practice since learners generally start complimenting each other for pleasure before and after the class time. After studying the function of complimenting as a conversation opener, learners also practice initiating a conversation with compliments, extending the topic and sustaining the conversation.

Procedure

1. Introduction: Day 1
    a. General warm-up and introduction to pragmatics
    b. Introduce the concepts of compliments and flattery. Teach related vocabulary (e.g., compliment/butter up/apple polish).
    c. Present a sample dialogue of complimenting between instructors.
    d. Initial inventory. Have students individually work on the pre-instruction inventory to investigate their initial pragmatic level. (The inventory asks the following questions: 1) How often do you hear people complimenting each other in the US? 2) What do people say and how do they respond to compliments in the US? 3) Do you give and/or receive compliments in English? Are you always comfortable with

the way you exchange compliments in English? If no, when do you feel uncomfortable and why? 4) What do people say when they give and receive compliments in your country? Provide a literal translation of some examples. 5) What do people compliment others on? 6) Who is more likely to exchange compliments?)

2. Student research
   a. Introduce the findings of Manes and Wolfson's research: 85% of 1200 compliments consists of first three sentential patterns, 97.2% consists of nine patterns. (See Teachers' Resource).
   b. Students collect compliments and compare them with patterns reported in earlier research. Students should collect 3-5 compliments each. If students collect compliments by means of a tape recorder rather than note taking, they may need permission from the speakers. They may also need help transcribing their data. Teachers will probably want to look over the transcriptions before they are distributed to the class. The use of an observation worksheet can help learners (see Teacher Resource). Allow enough time for learners to receive or overhear naturally occurring compliments. [Editors' note: this activity works especially well at the beginning of the semester when students are visiting each other's dorm rooms and admiring the new rooms. This results in rather homogenous content, however.]
3. Awareness of Contextual Variables and Practice: Day 2
   a. Review the most common 9 sentential patterns discussed in (2) and have learners identify some of the patterns in their own data.
   b. Discuss contextual variables (gender, role, age, and relative status), and have learners analyze their own transcribed data with regard to such variables. Students may refer to their observation worksheets.
   c. Discuss sincerity in giving compliments and have learners evaluate the appropriateness of their transcribed interactions.
   d. Role-play of good examples between learners and practice complimenting in pairs.

e. To prepare for the teaching of compliment responses, have learners collect three compliment responses by sincerely complimenting three native English speakers, and jotting down their responses immediately after the each conversation.

4. Pragmatic Insights (optional)

   Learners can read about positive values of mainstream Americans in excerpts from Wolfson and Judd (1989, see Teacher Resource) and answer questions about the reading such as: Does this positive value of being slender apply to both men and women in the U.S.? Would it be all right to say "You've lost some weight, didn't you?" as a compliment? What's the possible danger?

5. Responses to Compliments: Day 3

   a. Model short exchanges between instructors using "responses to compliments" in Teacher Resource. Elicit learners' observations of each interaction, and teach four self-praise avoidance strategies (downgrading the compliment, questioning the compliment, shifting the credit away from themselves, and returning a compliment) as types of responses that deflect compliments.

   b. Share some good transcriptions by the learners (see homework assignment in 4b above) and have the whole class identify the responding patterns.

   c. Practice giving and responding to compliments in a mingling activity. Students form two concentric circles, each facing a partner. One compliments the other, who responds. The outer circle rotates and each student finds a new partner and repeats the process; the circles switch roles after practicing sufficiently.

6. Compliments as a Conversation Opener: Day 4

   a. Model the conversation with compliments as openers (see Teacher Resource). Have learners highlight topics, point out the rapidly shifting topics, and identify the conversation-opener function of complimenting.

   b. Have learners practice in pairs opening a conversation with a compliment and develop it.

7. Closing and Relating to Other Functions

   a. Have students complete the post-instruction inventory individually. (The inventory asks the following questions: 1) Write down an imaginary compliment interaction as

you would say it. 2) After studying about compliments, how do you feel about giving and receiving compliments in English? 3) Did the classroom information help you to feel more comfortable with giving and receiving compliments?)

b. Show a list of other functions of language and have students indicate their interests in such acts. (This can be done as the final question of the inventory: 4) Are you interested in learning about other functions of English? Check the ones you are interested in: greetings, thanking, inviting, refusing invitations, requests, apologies, congratulating, offering condolences, addressing people.)

Rationale

Complimenting is a tool of establishing friendship that creates ties of solidarity in U.S. culture. It also is an important social strategy in that it functions as an opener for a conversation and allows meaningful social interaction to follow. Neglecting to give compliments may even be understood as a sign of disapproval, and the inappropriate use of compliments may cause embarrassment and even offense. The speech act set of compliments has highly structured formulas with rather simple linguistic structures. According to Manes and Wolfson (1981), 85% of the American compliments contained one of the three simple sentential patterns; the great majority of compliments included the most common five adjectives (*nice*, *good*, *beautiful*, *pretty*, and *great*) and two verbs (*like* and *love*) (pp.117-120). Despite this relative linguistic simplicity of the form of compliments, the act of complimenting is not as simple.

Prior to the instruction, I consulted eight ESL textbooks to investigate how they taught pragmatic behavior. Although innovative ideas can be found especially in recent textbooks, it was still impossible to identify an approach that highlighted the cultural nature of complimenting, required learners' initiative in observing the linguistic and pragmatic rules, and exposed learners to authentic input, thus stimulating their motivation. In planning classroom activities, I incorporated some textbook ideas into Billmyer's (1990) and Dunham's (1992) method of classroom instruction about compliments and replies to compliments. As a result, I assigned learners to collect examples of naive speakers'

complimenting interactions. This procedure, if adopted for every speech act, may be time-consuming and impose too great a burden on the learners. However, this student involvement seemed to have been a stimulating starter which gave learners insights regarding a whole set of unfamiliar pragmatic rules.

Alternatives and Caveats

The inventories that students complete before and after the unit can be very informative for the teacher (and students) and can serve as a gauge of learner involvement and interest. In the classes that I have taught, students created compliment interactions that were fairly short, whereas after the instruction, their compliments and responses were longer and rich. After instruction, their dialogues also reflected a variety of compliment response types. In contrast to the initial dialogues in which learners tended to accept compliments merely by saying "thank you", they seemed to have acquired a variety of responding expressions adding questioning, shifting credit and downgrading, to the strategy the simple acceptance of a compliment. Having various tools of communication allows learners to respond at their own level of comfort, in this case deflecting compliments rather than simply accepting them. This is further supported by the fact that in the post-instruction inventory, many of the learners reported that they felt good about giving and receiving compliments and that it was important to learn how to do it. Compared with their responses to the pre-instruction inventory, where fewer than a third of the learners reported that they were comfortable with compliments in English and two-thirds were not, the newly acquired knowledge and skills may be considered the tools with which they express their feelings freely and comfortably. In summary, this instruction contributed to the learners' pragmatic awareness, increased their linguistic and pragmatic input, and improved their comfort and confidence level. Most students indicated strong interest in learning other speech acts such as refusing an invitation, apologizing, giving condolences, and making a request. Thus, learners' understanding of giving and receiving compliments assisted in their broader interest in pragmatics.

Due to the nature of the task, teachers may have to control some of the variables: for example the gender of the complimenters, age, or environment. The advantage of having the learners observe speakers of their own gender, age, and status as students has the advantage of offering language models from similar speakers.

Teaching this unit in EFL contexts would require some changes. Instructors may use TV dramas and feature films so that learners can observe scripted complimenting interactions in context. The use of technology may also allow learners to interview native English speakers. With the use of e-mail or chat features, learners would be able to ask how native English speakers would give and receive compliments. The data from this study can also be shared with EFL classes. Joint instructional projects by EFL and ESL

teachers might enable learners to collaborate on gathering and analyzing data in two entirely different contexts at the same time.

Teacher's Resource

Compliment Formulas

Top 3 compliment formulas (Manes and Wolfson 1981, pp. 120-121)
1. NP is/look (really) ADJ (*Your blouse is really beautiful; Your hair looks great!)*
2. I really like/love NP *(I really like your dress; I love your new apartment*)
3. PRO is (really) ADJ NP (*That's a really nice rug.; That's a great looking car)*

Additional six formulas
4. You have such beautiful hair.
5. What a lovely baby you have!
6. Isn't your ring beautiful!
7. You (really) did a good job!
8. You (really) handled that situation well!
9. Nice game!

Observation Worksheet

For the next few days, pay attention to any compliments that you give, receive, or overhear and jot them down on your notepads. Observe carefully the circumstances in which these compliments were given and received in terms of role, gender, status, and other factors. Fill out the following form and then decide whether or not the interaction was appropriate.

	Gender	Role	Status	Other info	Appropriate-ness
Ex. **Jodi**: That's a nice sweater! **Noriko**: Oh, you like it? **Jodi**: Yeah, that's a nice color. **Noriko:** Thanks!	Female - Female	Student - Student	Equals	Younger-older	Sincere/ appropriate
Interaction 1 (2 and 3) A:					

Reading (optional)

Positive Values of Mainstream Americans
(N. Wolfson & E. Judd, 1983. *Sociolinguistics and Language* Acquisition*)*

1. Being slim has strong positive value among mainstream speakers of American English, and the adjective *thin* (e.g., "You look thin") is interpreted as complimentary in itself in this society. That this is very definitely not the case for speakers from other societies around the world is often a cause of some confusion, and even insult, when nonnative speakers are the recipients of such remarks. Favorable comments on the attractiveness of one's children, pets, and even husbands, boyfriends, wives, or girlfriends seem to fall within this category, as do compliments on cars and houses. (p. 113)

Question 1. Does this positive value of being slender apply to both men and women in the U.S.? Question 2. Would it be all right to say, "You lost some weight, didn't you?" as a compliment?
What's the possible danger?

2. It is useful for nonnative speakers to know, for example, that the quality of newness is so highly valued in this society that a compliment is appropriate whenever and acquaintance is seen with something new, whether it is a car, a new article of clothing, or a haircut. The fact that the new appearance may be due to an alteration (such as a new hairstyle or the loss of weight) as well as to a purchase leads us to conclude that the true importance of the comment lies in the speaker's having noticed a change, thereby proving that he or she considers the addressee worthy of attention. (p. 114)

Question 1. Do you agree that newness is highly valued in the U.S.? What about in your country?
Question 2. What would be an example of the "new appearances"?

Compliment Response Formulas (Billmyer 1990, p36)

Responses to compliments	**Response types**
1. A: That's a nice shirt you are wearing! B: Well, I just got it in Target, though. It was pretty cheap	downgrading
2. A: You did an excellent job yesterday, Jim! I really enjoyed your presentation. B: Do you really think so? A: Oh, yeah, it was fabulous.	questioning
3. A: I love your clock. It looks great in your living room! B: Thanks. A friend of mine brought it to me from	

Oregon. *shifting credit*

4. A: Yr lookin good!
   B: Thanks. S'r you! returning

Compliments as Conversational Openers

A & C = daughters
B = mother

A: That's a nice sweater, mom.
B: Thanks.
C: It really is very nice. Where did you get it?
B: I got it at Second Time Around in exchange for the red bag.
A: Oh, you got rid of the red bag?
B: Year, well, what else was I going to do with it?
A: But it was a gift from Jenn.
B: I know, but that's okay, she wouldn't mind. We've used it enough.
C: Speaking of Jenn, how's she doing, I wonder. We haven't heard from her much these days,
have we?
B: No, not much, which doesn't surprise me, since she's gone on a whale-watching tour off the
coast. She must be traveling in Canada by now.
C: Oh, really? I never knew that! How did I miss such news?
A: You never knew that? Oh, that's right! You were out of town on business the last time she
stopped by. Now was it when you were in New York or Chicago?

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Teaching Refusals in an EFL Setting

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Level: Intermediate-Low

Time: 8 lessons, 90 minutes each

Resources: For teaching Japanese learners, this chapter. To adapt for learners of other language backgrounds, L1 dialogues for comparison. Comparison graphs where available.

Goals:

1) Raising awareness that misunderstandings can be caused by differences in performing speech acts between Japanese and Americans.
2) Making learners aware of what they know already and encourage them to use their universal or transferable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts.
3) Teaching the appropriate linguistic forms that are likely to be encountered in performing speech acts.

Description of the Activity

This chapter presents activities to help learners become familiar with American English refusals. The lesson is organized progressively in five phases: Feeling, Doing, Thinking, Understanding and Using. These phases help students to realize that "speaking is doing," to think about their own language use, and to discover common and different aspects of conducting speech acts between Japanese and Americans. The activities in this chapter are based on the chapter on refusals from Yoshida, Kamiya, Kondo, and Tokiwa (2000) which covers a range of speech acts.

Feeling (Warm-up) phase

The listening comprehension task in this phase is designed to help students to get the feeling of the speech act being dealt with. The students hear two different dialogues in a sample hypothetical speech situation and are asked to answer questions about what is happening and how the student feels about the two dialogues. The following two taped dialogues are played. One of the dialogues represents how Japanese learners of English typically refusing an invitation (dialogue 1) and the other one represents the typical American way (dialogue 2).

Narration: Mary asks Shinya to go camping with her next weekend, but Shinya doesn't feel like going.

Dialogue 1
Mary: Hi, Shinya. I'm planning to go camping next weekend with my friends. How about going with us?
Shinya: I'm sorry, but I'm busy next weekend. Sorry.
Mary: Are you sure you don't want to go? It should be a lot of fun.
Shinya: No, I really can't. I'm sorry.

Dialogue 2
Mary: Hi, Shinya. I'm planning to go camping next weekend with my friends. Would you like to come with us?
Shinya: Oh, I'd like to, but I can't go. I have a math test on Monday.
Mary: Are you sure you don't want to go? Come on, Shinya. It should be a lot of fun.
Shinya: I wish I could, but I really need to study for that test. Thanks for inviting me, though.

In this activity, students realize that the speech act can be realized in different ways, and they do have certain preference in the way it is conducted. At this phase I ask students to raise their hands to show which dialogue they preferred, and usually more Japanese students prefer Dialogue 1'of the given example. I also ask reasons why they chose one or the other. Some of my students would say that they liked Dialogue 1 because Shinya apologizes frequently. I do not tell students which dialogue is the American or Japanese way at this point, because that is for them to find out in the latter part of the lesson.

Doing phase

The students are presented with another hypothetical speech situation (called situation 1) in which they are asked to write responses in a way similar to a discourse completion task, and to role-play the situation with their classmates. In refusal the chapter the following situation is given.

SITUATION 1: Ski Trip

A friend of yours, Jennifer, asks you to go on a ski trip with her and her friends next weekend, but you don't feel like going, because you don't like some of the people who are going.

The aim of this phase is to see what each learner can do with his/her present knowledge prior to any instruction dealing with cultural differences and linguistic expressions.

Thinking phase

In this phase students are asked to analyze their own speech act performance. Students are presented with various ways of performing refusals. These classifications are simplified versions of Speech Act Sets, which are often used in the analysis of interlanguage pragmatics research. With these, the learners can examine the strategies they used in Situation 1 in the Doing phase. For example, learners are given a rule of thumb, such as "Most refusals include expressions stating the reason why you are refusing. The following types of expressions can be used together with expressions stating the reason for refusing". Then the following five types of strategies and expressions for each strategy are introduced.

Type A: Positive Opinion	That sounds wonderful, but …
	I'd like/love to, but …
	I wish I could, but …
Type B: Thanking	Thank you for the invitation.
	Thanks, but …
Type C: Apology	I'm sorry, but …
Type D: Alternative	Maybe some other time.
	Perhaps next time.
Type E: Direct Refusal	I can't go.
	I can't make it.
+ Reason	I already have other plans.
	I have to …

First a listening exercise is provided here to help students understand which expression falls into which type. In their analysis of their performance, students can choose more than one type of strategy depending on what they said in Situation 1. At the end of this phase I conduct a quick survey of refusal types by asking students to raise their hands so that they can see which type was most commonly used among them.

Understanding phase

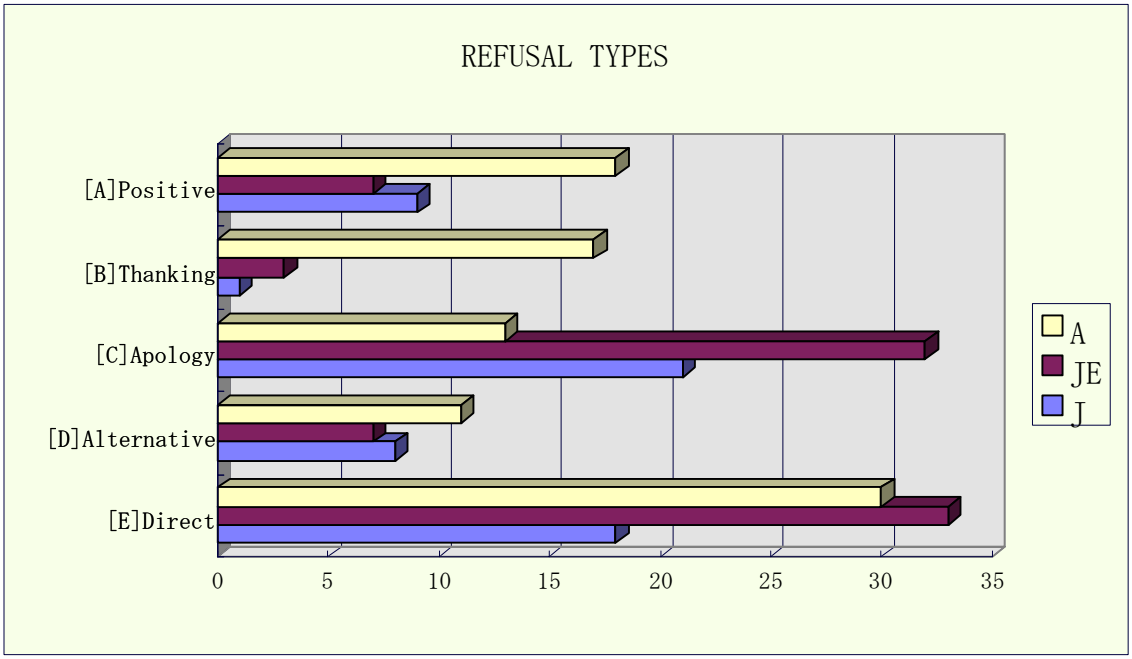
In this phase the learners are encouraged to discover the characteristic differences that exist in Japanese and American English when various speech acts are performed. The data presented here in the form of graphs come from the following three groups of college students who filled out Discourse Completion Tasks for Situation 1.

1) 50 Americans speaking English (A)

2) 50 Japanese learners of English speaking English (JE)

3) 50 Japanese speaking Japanese (J)

Students meet in groups and are asked to compare these three groups of speakers and to discuss similarities and differences in their way of conducting speech acts. In the refusal chapter the following graph is presented for the analysis and discussion (see Yoshida et al., 2000, for graphs comparing the production of other speech acts). The use of five types of strategies, which were introduced in Thinking phase, is shown on the graph.



* One person may use more than one refusal type.

The important point in this phase is that the task is designed so that learners can be involved in active thinking, instead of passively reading descriptions on cultural differences. Analyzing the graphs also has the merit of helping the students to avoid extreme stereotyping, as the graphs show certain tendencies rather than "one or zero" phenomena. I believe that “it is vital that teaching materials on L2 pragmatics are research-based" (Kasper 1997).

After the small group discussion, I ask group leaders to share what they talked about with the rest of the class. Students realize that their performance in the Doing phase is similar to JE group in the data, and that sometimes they may experience pragmatic transfer from their native language. For example, they find that the strong Japanese preference for the apology strategy in refusals may be reflected in their English refusals as well. Similarly,

the limited use of the thanking strategy in Japanese is transferred in their English refusals. They also realize that they sometimes cannot do what they can in their native language when they speak in English because of their linguistic limitations. Some students express the feeling that they are reluctant to use certain strategies because of their cultural values. In the apology chapter, some learners said that they felt uncomfortable saying excuses, because in Japanese culture it is a sign of insincerity. These discussions successfully help students to raise pragmatic awareness.

Using phase

Having gone through the four phases, the students by this time have satisfactory knowledge about how to use the vocabulary and expressions naturally in their verbal acts. The aim of this phase is to provide sufficient oral activity based on the knowledge students have acquired up to this point.

In the Using phase, model dialogues are presented for listening and role-playing. This exercise helps students to be able to use appropriate linguistic expressions useful in performing refusals. I ask them not only to read dialogues along, but also to pay special attention to rhythm and intonation so that they can put feelings and emotions into their words.

Dialogue 1
Brian: Hi, Satomi. I'm planning to go on a ski trip next weekend. How about going with us?
Satomi: Oh, I'm sorry , but my family has already made plans.

Dialogue 2
Brian: Hi, Satomi. I'm planning to go on a ski trip next weekend. How about going with us?
Satomi: Oh, I'd love to go, but I've got to work this weekend.

Dialogue 3
Brian: Hi, Satomi. I'm going on a ski trip with some of my friends next weekend. Would you like to come with us?
Satomi: I can't afford to go on a ski trip right now. I used all my money for my new car. Maybe some other time.

Dialogue 4
Brian: Hi, Satomi. I'm planning to go on a ski trip next weekend. Can you come with us?
Satomi: I can't make it this weekend. I've been invited to a party on Saturday.

Dialogue 5

Brian: Hi, Satomi. I'm going on a ski trip with some of my friends next weekend. Would you like to come with us?
Satomi: Oh, thanks for asking me, but I need to do homework for my biology class. Thank you for the invitation, though.

Then the following two new situations are given so that the students may practice writing responses and creating their own role-plays.

SITUATION 2: Concert Ticket
Your classmate, Tony, plays in a jazz band. He is going to have a concert soon, and he asks you to buy a ticket to the concert. You really do not want to go, because it will cost you $23, and you feel this is too expensive.

SITUATION 3: Party Invitation
Dr. Kane, a professor at your college, invites you to a party at his house. But as you don't like him very much, you don't feel like going.

I encourage students to go around the classroom and find many partners so that they can have sufficient practice. If time allows, students are asked to think of other possible situations for their further role-play practice. The students end their practice not by just memorizing and repeating 'an ideal model dialogue,' but by creating their own dialogue without losing their identities all together. As Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (1991) put it, "Successful communication is a matter of optimal rather than total convergence". The last phase of activities offers students opportunities for such optimal convergence.

Procedure

1. Feeling (Warm-up) phase

Listening to two different dialogues and answering questions

2. Doing phase

Discourse Completion Task and role-play

3. Thinking phase
   (a) Looking at the classification of different types of a given speech act
   (b) Listening to dialogues and writing down key expressions of each type
   (c) Analyzing their own speech act performance according to types
4. Understanding phase

(a) Looking at the graphs and making comparison of speech act performance by Japanese, Americans, and Japanese learners of English.

(b) Discussion in class

5. Using phase

(a) Listening and role-play practice of model dialogues

(b) Discourse Completion and role-play tasks on new situations

Rationale

Instruction in pragmatics helps students realize that "speaking is doing," to think about their own language use, and to discover common and different aspects of conducting speech acts across cultures. Various class activities, such as listening comprehension and role-plays, help students improve their linguistic skills as well. For example, the graph-reading activities not only allow learners to come to their own conclusions about speech act realization in difference cultures, it reinforces an analytical skill often taught in ESL/EFL academic courses. Asking learners to reflect on their feelings about trying out patterns of speech act production typical of another culture encourages them to reflect on how far they want to go in adapting or adopting the target language realizations. Some students express the feeling that they are reluctant to use certain strategies because of their cultural values. This has also come up when I teach apologies: Some learners said that they felt uncomfortable saying excuses, because in Japanese culture it is a sign of insincerity.

Alternatives and Caveats

The basic format for this teaching unit contains five phases (Feeling, Doing, Thinking, Understanding and Using) that can be used with any speech act (see Yoshida et al., 2000) or with a wide range of conversational features. Because I teach English in Japan, these lessons are specifically designed for Japanese EFL students, but the format can be modified for groups with other first backgrounds. In a mixed first-language group as found in ESL classes, students can be responsible for bringing in representative L1 dialogues. I have used the technique of having students write down their role plays before acting them out (this also results in a written record for later comparison), but more orally focussed groups might enjoy oral planning before the performance. In that case, one group in the audience can be asked to take notes on one role play for the subsequent class discussion.

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